

Amherst Historical Commission Meeting, January 8, 2007
Second Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Present: Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Michael Hanke, Edith MacMullen, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald; **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning.

Ms. MacMullen called the meeting to order at 7:16 and began by introducing Betty Sharpe, the newest member of the Historical Commission. Ms. Sharpe further introduced herself and described her background in museum work and as an historian.

Mr. Hanke moved approval of the minutes of the November 20 meeting; the motion was seconded by Ms. Faye and approved unanimously. Notes of the meeting of December 18 were accepted with two typographical corrections on a motion by Ms. Faye, seconded by Ms. Carpenter.

At Ms. MacMullen's request Ms. Carpenter reported on the both the Historical Commission's meeting with the Conservation Commission and last Thursday's regular Conservation Commission session. Ms. Faye and Ms. MacMullen also commented on the December 18 meeting; the Conservation Commission seemed to have little interest in the preservation of historic agricultural properties, but Mr. Tucker notes that their prior support of the Town Meeting article had to do only with agreeing to the release of 1.7 acres from APR. Mr. Tucker indicated that the Conservation Commission is still prepared to talk about alternate plans, but does have a variety of other pressures for support of open space preservation. Mr. Tucker also noted the long history of the Town in acquiring land for conservation and open space. Mr. Tucker recapped the history of the 575 North East Street transactions in response to a question from Ms. Sharpe.

Committee reports:

Ms. MacMullen distributed a letter from former Historical Commission member Jean Thompson, raising a series of questions about delays in completing planned work on the West Cemetery. In response, Mr. Tucker reported on West Cemetery improvements:

- o he reports black metal brochure boxes are on order;
- o he has talked with the Public Works Department electrician about doing the lighting project;
- o signs on Triangle Street will be done by DPW;
- o North Pleasant Street signs will be dealt with as part of the streetscape improvements on North Pleasant;
- o headstone restoration; Mr. Tucker met with Bonnie Parsons and she is to develop a proposal on the restoration project.

Ms. MacMullen raised a question about the status of the outlying residential National Register nominations: Bonnie Parsons is going to review them, starting with the Warner house, and then working on the others. We need to locate the Dana House documentation and get it to her, too. We also need to follow up on Tobias Baskin's home on East Pleasant Street; we will try to schedule a visit for 2:00 on Friday, January 19.

The Dickinson Museum historic landscape study provoked a question from Ms. Faye about whether town needs an historic preservation restriction on the property. Mr. Tucker noted that the Commission also has funds for signs for Dickinson district. Ms. MacMullen asked Mr. Hanke if he would think about design of signage for historic districts and he graciously agreed.

Ms. MacMullen commented on the budget presentation from the Historical Commission to CPAC scheduled for January 16. The latest budget revision includes \$5,000 for the Town Tomb; we need to reduce the \$75,000 for South Cemetery to \$70,000 but the other lines remain unchanged. Ms. Faye asked about the document preservation initiative, and Ms. Carpenter reiterated the request for a progress report from the Town Clerk's Office and Jones Library. Mr.

Tucker has talked with Mr. Pacunis, the new town clerk, and Tevis Kimball about the project and he will request a progress report. Other budget lines have been adjusted, including the interpretive signs and publications. The Commission had a brief discussion of the Bay Road corridor archaeological and area work. Mr. Tucker clarified the fact that the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey and planning grant match needs to be in FY 08 budget and appropriated by May to have it in hand for the December round of applications to the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The grant would be to do additional research and documentation on town inventory. The annual set-aside is seen as a constant that started in the current fiscal year largely as reaction to Kimball House situation. The historic landscape acquisitions line is new and largely motivated by our current conversations with the Conservation Commission. The Commission engaged in some discussion of CPA budget proposal, sources of project initiatives, and adjustments to previous drafts. Ms. Carpenter asked for accounting of prior appropriations by category. Ms. Sharpe question about HC funding for surveys of properties like the Amherst Woman's Club. Mr. Tucker issue of return to town from private organizations, e.g. historic preservation restrictions. Ms. Faye urges that we spend funds and complete projects for which appropriations were made in prior years.

Ms. MacMullen invited a motion on the budget; Mr. Hanke moved approval of the Historical Commission CPA budget proposal as discussed; Mr. Denit seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Ms. MacMullen will take the budget to the CPAC meeting on January 16 at 7:00; she cordially invited Mr. Wald and Ms. Carpenter to attend as well.

Mr. Wald reported on the Comprehensive Planning Committee; there is still a need for Historical Commission representatives on some of the working groups. Ms. Faye may be able to serve on one of them: economic development and "natural and cultural resources" are the two key areas for Commission participation.

Mr. Denit reported that the 250th anniversary is not terribly active at the moment, but expected to resume activity after holiday hiatus. Ms. Carpenter agreed to be publicly flogged if she doesn't do something about publications, especially contacting Ed Wilfert.

A public meeting on the South Amherst Common is scheduled for 7:00 on January 29 at the Munson Library. Mr. Tucker provided a brief history of the South Common and other town commons initiatives. He noted that the Public Works Department sees the commons as roads, but there are also issues of public space. He described Bonnie Parsons' study of the history of the South Common and observed that the Public Works Committee has its own issues about commons and surveys.

Mr. Tucker has a proposal from Bonnie Parsons for the East Village Common project; we need to map the full extent of the earlier common. Ms. MacMullen asked Ms. Sharpe to work with Ms. Parsons on the East Village and to develop some background information for a possible expansion of the East Village district. Mr. Hanke questioned the travel expenses in the proposal. Ms. Faye moved and Mr. Wald seconded a motion to accept Ms. Parsons' proposal; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Denit presented his review of historic structures at UMass, especially barns. There are issues about the preservation of a variety of structures besides barns. Ms. Faye did a survey of UMass properties some years ago, and the University wasn't particularly interested in the information she provided. But the surveys did go to the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Mr. Tucker raised a question about the possible relationship between UMass planning and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The Commission discussed of how we might draw some attention to UMass structures. Ms. MacMullen and Mr. Denit will try to talk with Facilities people at UMass and others will think about possible contacts. The Commission considered whether the 250th anniversary could be used, or perhaps a publication, to shed some light on the historic UMass story.

Mr. Tucker reported on the Town's Civil War plaques currently in storage. Mr. Shaffer, the town manager, wants to bring a couple of them back to town hall and he has written to the Historical Commission asking for our opinion.

Ms. Faye moved adjournment, Mr. Denit seconded her, and the Commission agreed at 9:34 p.m.

The Historical Commission meeting scheduled for January 22 is cancelled.

The next meeting will be the January 29 public hearing on the South Amherst Common.

Next meeting:
February 12 at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk